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9-2002

EVST 594.02: Environmental History - Issues and Activism

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EVST 594.02 Environmental History, Issues & Activism
Fall 2002, MW 5:10 - 6:30 p.m., JRH 203

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This course-seminar is an introduction to graduate work in Environmental Studies. We shall begin by setting the context; that is, by looking at the settling of Montana and the inner mountain west, focusing particularly upon the economic and political history. In the process we shall uncover the seeds of the key conservation-environmental issues that capture our attention today. Based upon your interests, we shall then turn to examine selected conservation-environmental issues of the inner mountain west in detail. Within those examinations, we shall concentrate upon the strategic approaches and options available to public sector and non-profit citizen groups and why specific groups selected their courses of action. We shall examine the links between specific strategic approaches and the work-roles required of activists to carry them out. Finally we shall reflect upon what we have learned and upon the activist roles that you intend to take.

The books for the course-seminar are available in the University bookstore. They are, in the order in which we shall read them:

Charles Wilkinson: *Crossing the Next Meridian*

Dan Flores: *The Natural West*

Karen Mutz, Gary Bryner, Douglas Kenney: *Justice and Natural Resources*

Jack Turner: *The Abstract Wild*

The assignments for the class are, in order:

- 1) Lead class discussions of *Crossing the Next Meridian* and *The Natural West*. Prepare questions for discussion with Dan Flores.
- 2) Individually, or in groups, identify at least three non-profit or public sector conservation-environmental groups working on a issue of interest to you, and do an organizational analysis of each group. Your analysis should include;
 - name, mission, purpose of group
 - history of organization; how has its mission-purpose changed over time and why?
 - structure of organization
 - programs of organization
 - budget (expenditures and income sources) of group
 - strategic approaches that underlie organization's work:
 - what are the group's assumptions or understandings about the causes of environmental problems;
 - how do these assumptions shape their approaches to problems;
 - how are their assumptions tempered by the realities of their organizational history and structure;
 - how would you characterize their activism?
 - conclusion: your sense of organization's effectiveness, limitations etc and of how you would fit into their approaches and activism models.

As a class we shall compile your analyses into an informational binder that can be available for all students seeking information on particular environmental groups.

- 3) You shall prepare a proposal of what, at this point in time, you think your thesis, professional paper or portfolio topic might be and include a projected course of study for completion of the program.
- 4) Based upon your work in the course and upon your reading and our discussions of *The Abstract Wild* and *Justice and Natural Resources*, you shall write an essay reflecting upon how you see yourself as an activist.
- 5) Attend classes and field trips, which shall be organized dependent upon your interests.

Some regulations you need to know:

- The last day to drop with refund is 23 September; without refund, 14 October. I shall not entertain late drop petitions.
- Incompletes...first, avoid like the plague. The incomplete remains on your permanent record (i.e. IA or IB etc.). Requests for incompletes must meet the criteria set forth on page 21 of the University catalog, 2002-2003.
- This course is offered only for a traditional letter grade.
- Grades will be based upon my assessment of the quality of your written work and, to some extent, your participation in class discussions. In reading your written work I shall be evaluating your content and how well you write.

Please come and talk to me about any problems, concerns, questions or ideas you have for the course. I am available every day of the week except if I am out of town or off to meetings.

Finally, learning should be joyful and together I trust we can make our work together engaging, insightful and fun.